

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 643

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to celebrate February 3-7, 2020, as "Voters' Rights Week" in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was ratified on February 3, 1870, prohibits the federal government and each state from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude"; and

WHEREAS, the first known African-American voter after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment was Thomas Mundy Peterson, who cast his ballot on March 31, 1870, in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, in a referendum election for the adoption of a new city charter; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the United States Supreme Court interpreted the Fifteenth Amendment narrowly, leading to the enactment of both federal and state laws that sharply curtailed the voting rights of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, to help enforce the Fifteenth Amendment, the United States Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which provided federal oversight of elections in discriminatory jurisdictions, banned literacy tests and similar discriminatory devices, and created legal remedies for people affected by voting discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the week of February 3, 2020, marks the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, and it is highly appropriate that we celebrate this historic milestone on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we celebrate the first week of February 2020 as "Voters' Rights Week" in

Tennessee in honor of the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on February 3, 1870.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.